The Church invites us to base our devotion to Mary on the Scriptures that speak of her and of her relation to Jesus. Our prayer – with Mary and to Mary – leads us to a deeper sharing in the liturgy, the worship Jesus gives to the Father, the worship we give to God in his name. Our devotion to Mary leads us to love God as she did: as the mother of Jesus, as the first to believe in him, his first disciple. She is inseparably linked to the saving activity of Jesus, her Son.

A model for the Church: The Second Vatican Council describes Mary and her role from the Scriptures and Catholic tradition. Mary is a model for the Church and for individual Christians. What God has done in Mary he also does in us.

Chosen by God. The Father chose Mary to be the mother of his Son. He chooses each of us to carry out a unique vocation on earth, within his beloved Church.

Gifted with faith. The Father endowed Mary with special gifts of grace from the moment of her conception. He gives each of us grace and faith at the time of our baptism, and continues to give us gifts to work for building up his Church.

Called to obedience. Mary was invited to obey God's will for her in her daily life. Jesus Christ also came to do the Father's will. We too – as Church and as individuals – are called to obey the will of the Father each day.

Rewarded in heaven. At the end of her life on earth, Mary was raised, body and soul, to share in the eternal life of her Son. At the end of time, with the resurrection of the faithful, the entire Church in heaven will be together with Christ and Mary, singing the unending praises of the Father.

Vatican II: The Council linked Mary to the Church, saying that "in her, the Church admires and extols this exceptional result of the redemption and joyfully contemplates what is, as it were, a totally undistorted picture of its desires and hopes for itself as a whole."

Devotion to Mary: Pope Paul VI reminded us that "the ultimate purpose of devotion to the Blessed Virgin is to glorify God and lead Christians to commit themselves to a life which is in absolute conformity to his will". We continue to follow Christ as Mary did: hearing the word of God, keeping it in our hearts and doing the will of the Father. Jesus tells us that we are his friends when we do what he commands us; Mary's life is example of the fulfilment of that command.

All glory and honour is yours, almighty Father:
you have given us your Son to save us.
We praise you
for choosing Mary to be his mother,
for teaching her to believe your message,
for helping her to accept your holy will.

Strengthen us by your Spirit to be like Mary:
to ponder your word in our hearts,
to obey your will,
to love your Son,
to sing your praises each day.

Father,
we praise you through Jesus your Son
in the love of your Spirit,
for ever and ever. Amen!

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us.

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MARY, MOTHER OF OUR LORD

First to believe

Model of faith and obedience

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Mary in the Scriptures

Mary is described in the gospels as the mother of Jesus and as a model for all who follow him:

Chosen and blessed. The angel announces that Mary has been chosen to be the mother of the Saviour, whose name will be Jesus. She accepts God's will: she conceives by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the eternal Son of God becomes a man. (*Lk* 1.26-38; *Mt* 1.18-25.)

Mother of my Lord. Mary visits Elizabeth, who praises her for her faith. While in their mothers' womb, the two sons meet for the first time, and John the Baptist, from Elisabeth's womb, rejoices and testifies Mary's son as the Son of God. Mary glorifies God in her canticle of thanksgiving: God has made her blessed for all ages. (*Lk* 1.39-56.)

Mother of the Saviour. Jesus (a name that means "God saves") is born as the Saviour of the world. Mary receives the shepherds and the wise men, and ponders the meaning of all these events in her heart. (*Lk* 2.1-20; *Mt* 2.1-12.)

Presentation. In obedience to the law, Mary and Joseph present the child in the temple. Simeon prophesies that Jesus will save the nations and that Mary's heart will be pierced by a sword, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. The family returns to Nazareth, where Jesus grows in wisdom, age, and grace. (*Lk* 2.22-40.)

Finding Jesus in the temple. After Jesus becomes a son of the law at 12, he remains in the temple for several days. When Mary and Joseph find him, they are amazed at this first hint of his mission from his Father. Jesus returns to Nazareth with them and is obedient to them. (*Lk* 2.41-52.)

Cana: At Mary's request, Jesus works the first of his signs by changing water into wine, so that the wedding feast between God and humanity may continue. (*Jn* 2.1-12.)

Obeying God's will. Jesus tells us that all who obey the will of his Father are close to him. (Read *Mt* 12.46-50; *Mk*. 3.31-35; *Lk* 8.19-21.)

Praise of his mother. When someone praises his mother, Jesus adds that all who hear God's word and keep it are also blessed. (*Lk* 11.27-28.)

Calvary. Mary stands near Jesus' cross as he is dying, loving his own to the end. Our Lord entrusts his mother to the beloved disciple. (*Jn* 19.25-27; 13.1)

Waiting for Pentecost. In the days before Pentecost, Mary is with the apostles and disciples as they pray constantly for the coming of the Holy Spirit. (*Acts* 1.1-14.)

Mary in the Liturgy

The universal Church follows the emphases of Scripture and tradition by celebrating feasts in honour and memory of Mary.

Immaculate Conception: . . . . . December 8
Birth: . . . . . September 8
Holy name of Mary: . . . . . September 12
Presentation: . . . . . November 21
Annunciation: . . . . . March 25
Visitation: . . . . . May 31
Mother of God: . . . . . January 1
Sorrows: . . . . . September 15
Assumption: . . . . . August 15
Queenship: . . . . . August 22

Other feasts are included in national and local calendars, for example, Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12) as Patron of the Americas.

Mary in Christian Tradition

Early witnesses: After the completion of the New Testament, the Christian communities speak often of Mary with honour:

Ignatius of Antioch (martyred about 110) emphasizes that Jesus is the Son of God, and is born from a virgin: his birth from Mary shows that he is truly human.

Justin (martyred about 165) speaks of Mary as the new Eve: her belief and obedience are the opposite of Eve's behaviour.

Irenaeus, in the late second century, teaches that Mary is the mother of renewed humanity. (See *Rom* 5.15-19.)

In the late second century, Mary is seen as a symbol of the Church. By the early 200s, Hippolytus refers to Mary as the holy virgin. In 391, a synod at Milan refers to her as always a virgin.

Early ecumenical Councils witness to the faith of the Church: Christ is born of the virgin Mary (Constantinople I, 381); the virgin Mary is the God-bearer or Mother of God (Ephesus, 431; Chalcedon, 451).

The middle ages witnessed an explosion of love and devotion to the Mother of God. Almost every cathedral in Europe was dedicated to her.

Modern devotion: In 1854 Pius IX declared Mary to be free from all sin (Immaculate Conception) by the merits of Christ. In Canada, 14 dioceses hold her as Patron under this title. In 1950, Pius XII declared her bodily Assumption as sharing completely in the resurrection of her Son; 7 dioceses in Canada honour her as Patron under that title.